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Suspension Shock Characteristic Test Method And Apparatus

Related Application

10 Not Applicable.

Statement Regarding Federally Sponsored Research or Development

Not Applicable

15 Reference to a Microfiche Appendix

Not Applicable

Background of the Invention

20 1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to disk drive suspensions, and, more particularly, to suspension load beam designs that minimize second torsion gains through the aligning of the load beam side profile with the rotation centerline of the suspension.

25 2. Description of the Related Art

Shock performance, shock characteristic, or "shockability" of a suspension assembly may be defined as the maximum shock the suspension can be subjected to while the slider still maintains its pre-loaded configuration. It is inversely proportional to the 'effective mass' of the assembly. The effective mass of a suspension assembly (M) is the value of a point mass to be positioned at the free end of the suspension so that the moment it generates about the fixed end (mount plate) of the suspension is equivalent to net moment generated by the

entire head-suspension assembly. The inverse of the suspension effective mass gives a measure of its shockability.

Methods to determine the 'shockability' of a head suspension assembly have included subjecting the assembly to a shock impulse of known magnitude 5 and measuring the back flexing of the assembly, based on the observation that when an impulse is applied to the suspension mount plate, the free end that carries the head jerks backwards (the suspension is said to back flex) and then returns back to its undisturbed, original and normal position.

In this method, successive shock pulses with incrementally increased 10 magnitudes are applied, and for each shock pulse the magnitude of back flexing of the suspension is recorded. A regression analysis on the pulse values and the back flex values provides a value of shock pulse that corresponds to zero back flexing of the suspension. This value is the shock characteristic or shockability of the suspension assembly.

15 This test method is prone to a number of uncontrolled variables as set out in the Detailed Description section below that preclude the greatest accuracy and reproducibility of result.

Brief Summary of the Invention

20 It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved method and apparatus for determining the shock characteristic of a disk drive suspension. It is a further object to provide a shock characteristic test apparatus that serves as well as a spring rate tester, that handles multiple suspensions simultaneously

and identically in shock level, that provides a continuous, smooth, repeatable control of shock stimulus (acceleration) levels acceleration, that provides a direct reading of 'shockability' or the shock characteristic, without need of regression analysis, necessary), that is non-destructive and contact-less and is without a 5 sound pollution consequence.

These and other objects of the invention to appear hereinafter are realized in a method for determining the shock characteristic of a suspension having a fixed proximate portion, a cantilevered distal portion and a spring portion therebetween, including subjecting the suspension to a centrifugal force that 10 differentially displaces the distal portion relative to the proximate portion, measuring the displacement of the distal portion under the centrifugal force, and determining the suspension shock characteristic from the displacement.

In this and like embodiments, typically, the method also includes fixing the suspension base portion to a rotatable structure for rotation therewith to provide 15 the centrifugal force, maintaining a sensor opposite the distal portion, and sensing the displacement with the sensor to measure the displacement, engaging the distal portion with a sensor that senses the displacement, supporting the suspension of a rotatable structure, and carrying the sensor on the structure, supporting the suspension by the proximate portion on a rotatable 20 structure in distal portion cantilevering relation, supporting a sensor on the structure in distal portion displacement sensing relation, and sensing displacement of the distal structure under centrifugal force generated by rotation

of the structure, and subjecting a plurality of the suspensions to shock characteristic determination simultaneously.

In a further embodiment, the invention provides a method for determining the shock characteristic of a suspension having a proximate portion, a distal portion and a spring portion therebetween, and in which the shock characteristic is a function of the displacement of the distal portion relative to the proximate portion under shock load, including mounting the suspension proximate portion to a rotatable structure while maintaining the suspension distal portion cantilevered from the structure and arranged to be displaced from the structure under centrifugal force a distance that is a function of the suspension shock characteristic, sensing displacement of cantilevered distal portion of the suspension with a sensor that measures the distance of distal portion movement, and determining the suspension shock characteristic from the displacement measurement.

In this and like embodiments, typically, there is also included mounting a sensor on the rotatable structure engaged with the distal portion for rotation with the structure in distal portion displacement sensing relation, mounting a plurality of the suspensions and sensors to the rotatable structure for simultaneous shock characteristic determination, and engaging the sensor with the distal portion for displacement sensing.

In a further embodiment, the invention provides an apparatus for determining the shock characteristic of a suspension having a fixed proximate portion, a cantilevered distal portion and a spring portion therebetween and in

which displacement of the distal portion relative to the proximate portion under centrifugal force is a function of the shock characteristic, the apparatus comprising a rotatable structure that mounts the suspension by the proximate portion for rotation therewith under centrifugal force, and a displacement sensor

5 mounted to the rotatable structure in distal portion displacement sensing relation, the sensor sensing the displacement of the distal portion under the centrifugal force.

In this and like embodiments, typically, the apparatus suspension base portion is fixed to the rotatable structure for rotation therewith, the sensor

10 engages the distal portion in displacement sensing relation, the sensor is carried on the rotatable structure, the suspension is supported by the proximate portion fixed on the rotatable structure in distal portion cantilevering relation, the sensor is fixed on the rotatable structure arranged to sense displacement of the distal portion under centrifugal force generated by rotation of the structure, and a

15 plurality of the suspensions is carried on the rotatable structure for shock characteristic determination simultaneously.

In a further embodiment, the invention provides apparatus for determining the shock characteristic of a suspension having a proximate portion, a distal portion and a spring portion therebetween, the apparatus comprising a rotatable structure having a mount for the suspension base portion such that the distal portion is cantilevered over the rotatable structure, and a sensor carried on the rotatable structure for sensing the displacement of the distal portion relative to the proximate portion under shock load from centrifugal force imparted to the

suspension from the rotatable structure. In this and like embodiments, typically, the rotatable structure has a plurality of the mounts for mounting a plurality of the suspensions to the rotatable structure.

5 Brief Description of the Several Views of the Drawings

The invention will be further described in conjunction with the attached drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic view of a PRIOR ART suspension shock characteristic test apparatus.

10 Fig. 2 is a perspective view of the invention suspension shock characteristic test apparatus.

Detailed Description

15 The prior art method of measuring the shockability of a suspension 3 is illustrated in the PRIOR ART Fig. 1. In this method, the measure of the magnitude of back flexing is found by measuring the time taken by slider to 'fly' (swing backwards and come back to the normal position). This is logical, since the time taken for the slider 4 to fly will be proportional to the magnitude of back flexing if the spring constant of the assembly holds its value. But problems arise 20 with the measurement of both flight time (result of shock) and shock magnitude (the pulse imparted as shock). Shock impulses are usually administered by dropping a weight (the shock impulse creator) onto the mounting plate 5 of the suspension assembly 3 through a fixed height and allowing it to hit the plate

surface, as schematically depicted in Fig. 1. Altering drop height or changing the impact surface hardness can control magnitude and spread of the pulse in theory; however, in practice, it is difficult to achieve a smooth and continuous control over the shock magnitude.

5 Another problem with the Fig. 1 apparatus is the lack of repeatability in the application of shock impulses. The shock event depends entirely on the nature of impact, successive ones of which may have individually unique characteristics.

Yet another problem with the Fig. 1 apparatus and method is the difficulty of reliably measuring the 'flight time' (of the slider on the fly). When subjected to 10 a shock impulse, the suspension assembly (which can be roughly approximated to a 2nd order system) undergoes many oscillations before being completely dampened by the contact surface. Thus, it is hard to define among these successive oscillations a unique flight time associated with each shock event. Then, the shockability value is only obtained after regression analysis of the flight 15 time data.

Further, the Fig. 1 apparatus and method is only difficultly if at all converted to effect simultaneous testing on multiple suspensions.

Finally, in using the Fig. 1 apparatus and method practical difficulties abound including sound pollution from the successive impacts (at least three per 20 test), and the need for the suspension to survive the potentially destructive testing.

With reference now to the invention apparatus shown in Fig. 2, the apparatus 10 is useful to impart a smooth, continuously variable linear

acceleration to the bodies (suspensions 12) mounted on it, without having to shock any part of the set up. A rotor 14 having a radius 'r' and spinning at a constant angular velocity of ' ω ' imparts a constant linear acceleration of $\omega^2 r$ (directed outwards) to the suspensions 12 which are fixed by their mount plates

5 16 to the rotor, as shown. Position sensors 18 are mounted on the rotor 14 to monitor the back flexing of the sliders 22. The back flexing, related to ' ω ', is measured from the slider 22 normal position. This position information is transmitted to a stationary data acquisition system 24 via a set of brushes and slip rings or some wireless means (not shown) as is convenient.

10 Thus, the accurate value of ' ω ' corresponding to where the slider starts to 'take off' can be known, and this is converted into linear acceleration data and then shock values as a function of the measured back flexing.

At the dynamic equilibrium condition between the inertial (back flexing) force and the spring (restoring) force,

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(1) Effective mass (M) x Linear acceleration (a)=Spring constant (K) x Back flexing (d)—(1)

In equation (1), 'a' and 'd' are the measured variables and 'M' and 'K' are the

20 conditional unknowns. That means, depending on whether we know the values of 'M' or 'K', the second unknown ('K' or 'M' respectively) can be computed. In many cases the designer has a computed value for 'M' and would like to know the experimental value of 'K' or vice versa.

The invention apparatus thus provides for determining the shock characteristic of a suspension 10 having a fixed base or proximate portion 32, a cantilevered distal portion 34 and a spring portion 36. The displacement of the distal portion 34 relative to the proximate portion 32 under centrifugal force 5 imparted by the rotor 14 is a function of the shock characteristic. The apparatus comprises a rotatable structure, rotor 14, that mounts the suspension 10 by its proximate portion 32 for rotation therewith under centrifugal force, and a displacement sensor 18 mounted to the rotatable structure in distal portion displacement sensing relation. The sensor 18 senses the displacement of the 10 distal portion 34, including slider 22, under the centrifugal force.

The apparatus suspension base portion 32 is fixed to the rotatable structure, rotor 14, for rotation therewith; the sensor 18 can engage the distal portion 34 in displacement sensing relation, where contact is unobjectionable, or merely sense changes in distance where there is to be no contact between the 15 sensor 18 and the distal portion. The sensor 18 is preferably but not necessarily carried on the rotatable structure, while the suspension 10 is supported by the proximate portion 32 fixed on the rotatable structure in distal portion 34 cantilevering relation. Typically, as shown, the sensor 18 is fixed on the rotatable structure 14 and arranged to sense displacement of the distal portion under 20 centrifugal force generated by rotation of the structure. A plurality of the suspensions 10 can be carried on the rotatable structure 14 for multiple shock characteristic determinations simultaneously.

Sensor 18 can be of the optical-reflective type in which a light-emitting diode beams light onto the reflective surface of the slider, and the intensity of the reflected signal is sensed by a photo-diode whose output is related to a target's position. Or the sensor 18 can be of the capacitive type in which an electrode is

5 placed parallel to the slider 22 surface so that they together form a capacitor (air being the dielectric). The capacitance of the capacitor is then measured, using a bridge circuit for example. The capacitance is directly related to the spacing between the plates of the capacitor and thus the slider spacing from the sensor is known.

10 The movement of the suspension distal portion 34 is further indicative of the suspension 10 spring rate so that property is also measured.

In the method for determining the shock characteristic of a suspension 10 having a fixed proximate portion 32, a cantilevered distal portion 34 and a spring portion 36 therebetween, the steps include subjecting the suspension to a

15 centrifugal force that differentially displaces the distal portion relative to the proximate portion, measuring the displacement of the distal portion under the centrifugal force, and determining the suspension shock characteristic from the displacement, e.g. by fixing the suspension base portion to a rotatable structure 14 for rotation therewith to provide the centrifugal force, maintaining a sensor 18

20 opposite the distal portion, and sensing the displacement with the sensor to measure the displacement, engaging the distal portion physically or optically, or otherwise monitoring its position without engagement, with the sensor that senses the displacement, supporting the suspension on a rotatable structure,

and carrying the sensor on the structure, supporting the suspension by the proximate portion on a rotatable structure in distal portion cantilevering relation, supporting a sensor on the structure in distal portion displacement sensing relation, and sensing displacement of the distal structure under centrifugal force 5 generated by rotation of the structure, and subjecting a plurality of the suspensions to shock characteristic determination simultaneously.

The invention thus provides an improved method and apparatus for determining the shock characteristic of a disk drive suspension that serves as well as a spring rate tester, that handles multiple suspensions simultaneously 10 and identically in shock level, that provides a continuous, smooth, repeatable control of shock stimulus (acceleration) levels acceleration, that provides a direct reading of 'shockability' or the shock characteristic, without need of regression analysis), that is non-destructive and contact-less and is without a sound pollution consequence.

15 The foregoing objects are thus met.